

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 16, 2005

The Honorable Joe Knollenberg, Chairman
Transportation, Treasury, HUD Subcommittee
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Knollenberg:

As you prepare the Fiscal Year 2006 Transportation, Treasury and HUD Appropriations bill, we urge you to include a \$1 million earmark to continue research on flight attendant fatigue by the Civil Aerospace Medical Institute (CAMI). Additional research will help ensure that minimum rest time regulations are based on sound science. Our nation's flight attendants and the flying public deserve no less.

Last year, the Fiscal Year 2005 Omnibus Appropriations bill contained a \$200,000 allocation in the Federal Aviation Administration budget for a study on flight attendant fatigue. The House Report revealed the appropriators' concerns that current regulations "may not allow adequate rest time for flight attendants." Anecdotal evidence seems to confirm the fears of appropriators. We have all heard from flight attendants from all classes of airlines about the growing problem of fatigue due to work schedules that in some cases provide as little as 5 hours for actual sleep. Working long hours with little rest can impair a crewmember's decision-making abilities and performance of critical safety duties.

In the last thirty years, the scientific community has made extraordinary breakthroughs in the study of sleep, but more research is needed on how our improved understanding of fatigue applies in an aviation environment. Flight attendants are forced to contend with time zone changes, day and night flying, changing diets, irregular sleep habits, cumulative sleep debt, and noisy hotel environments. Few comprehensive studies have been done on flight attendant fatigue, and most were in foreign countries where the regulations on duty and rest consider factors not considered by U. S. regulations (for example, the number of time zone changes on one flight).

CAMI is to report back to Congress by June 1, 2005. Due to the short study period and limited funds, we believe that CAMI will be unable to study all the aspects of flight attendant fatigue that need to be thoroughly reviewed for a truly comprehensive review of the current regulations governing fatigue and rest. We support a continuation of the flight attendant fatigue study in the Fiscal Year 2006 Transportation, Treasury and HUD

Appropriations bill so that CAMI can fully evaluate the impact of the many fatigue factors and make recommendations to help resolve fatigue problems.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

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